2006 Gruber Award Co-Winners:

SFC William S. Funk, B/1-12 FA, 17th FA Brigade, and SFC Ivan J. Geter, A/2-20 FA, 4th Fires Brigade

Two outstanding NCOs were recognized as co-winners of the 2006 Gruber Awards for their innovations in support of the FA while they were deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) IV. Co-winner Sergeant First Class (SFC) William S. Funk is with B Battery, 1st Battalion, 12th Field Artillery (B/1-12 FA), 17th FA Brigade, out of Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and was deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Co-winner SFC Ivan J. Geter is with A/2-20 FA, 4th Fires Brigade, out of Fort Hood, Texas, and was deployed to Camp Fallujah, Iraq.

The Gruber Award was established in 2002 to recognize outstanding individual thought and innovation that results in significant contributions to or the enhancement of the FA's warfighting capabilities, morale, readiness or maintenance. It is named after Brigadier General Edmund L. Gruber, 1979-1941, who, as a First Lieutenant in 1908, composed the *Caisson Song* that the Army adapted as *The Army Goes Rolling Along* in 1952.

SFC Funk, B/1-12 FA. As a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 13M Multiple-Launch Rocket System (MLRS) Crewmember, he deployed in support of OIF as a gun-truck platoon sergeant. SFC Funk developed multiple force-protection modifications for the battery's vehicles to enhance the survivability of Soldiers during improvised explosive device (IED) attacks.

SFC William S. Funk

Following a January 2006 attack on a battery convoy that resulted in two Soldiers being injured by shrapnel, SFC Funk developed additional armor plating for the low-signature armored cab (LSAC) doors that mounted to existing brackets. His modification proved effective in IED strikes.

During the same attack, a secondary IED penetrated the fuel tank of an M915 truck, igniting the fuel and burning the truck to the ground. SFC Funk developed an external fuel tank armor kit, thus reducing the threat of fire from a ruptured fuel tank.

Along with his initial seven M1078 LSAC gun trucks, SFC Funk's platoon received three more M1088 LSAC trucks. These trucks had a fifth wheel to haul an M872 trailer. Due to the LSAC cab's weight, these trucks had an inherent tendency to roll over. SFC Funk identified the fault and worked on counterweight beds. He designed and built three beds that weighed approximately three tons each, eliminating the threat of a rollover accident on the M1088 trucks. These trucks now can serve as gun-trucks, creating an additional three convoy-escort platforms for the battery.

After representatives from Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, saw SFC Funk's design, they immediately adopted it and began implementing it on other M1088 LSACs throughout the Iraqi theater.

SFC Funk also developed a "crow's-nest"-type turret for the LSAC. His plans expanded upon the turret for the M1114 up-armored high-mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV) by adding additional armor plating and storage boxes for ammunition. His turret designs for the LSACs also have been adopted as the preferred standard across theater.

SFC Funk's modifications went beyond the M1078 and M1088 vehicles. He developed beds for maintenance "bob-tails" to increase the amount of tires and parts they can carry while on a convoy. His design used a large amount of previously unused space and had the added benefit of quick removal in the event the bob-tail needed to couple up with a trailer.

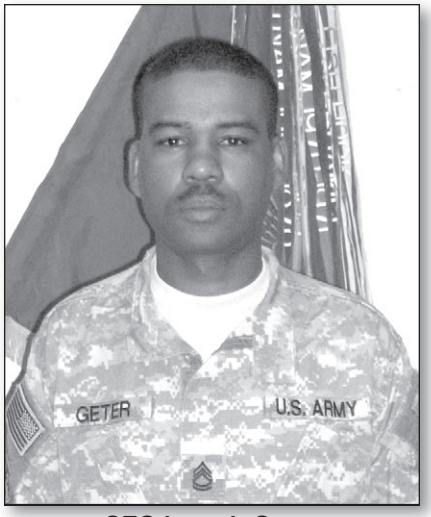
SFC Funk used his metal-working knowledge to increase the effectiveness of the M1114. He designed bolt-on storage boxes for the turrets for additional ammunition. Before he implemented these boxes, ammunition storage was severely limited on the turret. After his design, a gunner could store an additional 500 rounds in the turret for quick access.

SFC Funk also created a tow-bar adapter from the Ibis-Tek tow-bar system. The original head on the tow bar was designed for the towing pintle of an M1114. However, battery convoys consisted mainly of M915s whose towing pintles are too large to fit the tow-bar head. SFC Funk's adapter fit over the head of an Ibis-Tek tow bar and had an attached larger head for M915 pintles. His design was implemented throughout the 37th and 336th Transportation Groups.

SFC Funk's vast knowledge of metal work contributed to the final design of the HMMWV egress assistance trainer (HEAT). The original design for the trainer was very large and required an M915 or larger vehicle as its prime mover. He modified the design to fold into itself, creating a more compact, air-loadable trainer that now is being mass-produced for use throughout theater.

SFC Funk's ingenuity and desire to protect Soldiers make him a Pentathlete worthy of the 2006 Gruber Award. His excellence and professionalism set him apart from his peers in the Redleg community.

SFC Geter, A/2-20 FA. SFC Ivan J. Geter, an MOS 13M, served as the Operations NCO for A/2-20 at Camp Fallujah. He oversaw the MLRS qualification live-fire exercise in Kuwait that completed the battery's required certification and qualification to deliver kinetic fires in theater. This highly successful exercise contributed to the battery's selection by the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) as the sole provider of rocket and missile artillery fires in theater.



SFC Ivan J. Geter

Upon the battery's arrival at Combat Outpost (COP) Wolf, a remote camp located more than 60 miles from the nearest friendly base, SFC Geter developed tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) that were new to the fires brigade and the FA community as a whole. He set up a stand-alone battery operations center (BOC) using a mobile expandable command center (MECC) that set a new standard for detached operations. A completely self-sustaining unit, his BOC had voice and digital communications with the II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), Regimental Combat Team-7 (RCT-7) and his own higher echelons from the battalion to division levels. He used both the small extension node (SEN) and the command post node (CPN) satellite receivers to provide redundant communications in the event of a malfunction of voice or digital commo.

While at COP Wolf, SFC Geter oversaw a validation live fire of guided MLRS (GMLRS) unitary—the FA's first precision guided rocket—the primary weapon system the battery used in theater. The battery fired one round each from all six launchers in less than 20 minutes, easily surpassing the 30-minute Army training and evaluation program (ARTEP) time standard.

Remarkably, the battery was able to fire in a degraded mode when digital communications went down. The BOC responded to the issue admirably and restored digital communications to the final launcher, a testament to SFC Geter's rigorous training program, and completed the live-fire validation.

SFC Geter directed the BOC during several joint operations in the A1 Anbar Province, including Operations Mother of All Generators (MOAG), Lion, Azteca and Montgomery. The battery's role in Operation MOAG was to provide GMLRS unitary and Army tactical missile system-unitary (ATACMS-U) coverage along the travel route of a large generator that was to be used to provide essential electricity for the civilian population and Iraqi workforce.

SFC Geter oversaw the month-long preparations, including rehearsals with RCT-2 and the II MEF, which had MNC-I visibility. SFC Geter conducted dry missions from inside the GMLRS unitary's minimum range throughout the range fan and ensured all units were familiar with the route. He coordinated the rehearsals based on the MLRS release authority with on-scene commanders up to MNC-I.

Operations Lion, Azteca and Montgomery were more offensive in nature. SFC Geter prepared the BOC to fire in support of the I MEF (IMEF), coupled with Iraqi Army attachments, as they combatted A1 Qaeda in Iraq in the Hit-Haditha Triad. These operations resulted in disrupting the anti-Iraqi forces (AIF) in Baghdad and the surrounding area and the Coalition Forces' establishing firm bases.

Success in these operations was possible because of the sheer volume of rehearsals and planning SFC Geter conducted for each. Troops on the ground became fully aware of the precise missile fires they had available.

SFC Geter conducted more than 300 dry fire missions while at COP Wolf, maintaining an excellent response time of 90 seconds or less—a testament to his perseverance and dedication to duty.

Moreover, SFC Geter pioneered the battery's use of My Internet Relay Chat (MIRC)—a chat program similar to those used with civilian programs, such as America Online and Yahoo Instant Messengers. Through MIRC, SFC Geter gathered intelligence and received mission data on a laptop computer. He used MIRC to verify airspace clearance, send fire mission data and receive the command to fire.

He also used the effects management tool (EMT) to allow the battery operations officer to see everything that was going on in his advanced FA tactical data system (AFATDS). The operations officer could command and clear fire missions far easier than before. SFC Geter transformed his BOC into a fully-integrated digital command cell.

Soon after the IMEF took over its battlespace, IMEF moved A/2-20 FA to Camp Fallujah to better use its firing capabilities. SFC Geter was instrumental in relocating the battery. Through SFC Geter's leadership and attention to detail, the MECC was emplaced, voice and digital communications were established, and the battery was in position, ready-to-fire less than 48 hours after "boots hit the ground"—a full nine days ahead of schedule.

On 27 April 2006, D/1-506 IN came under machine gun fire from a compound in Ramadi. After ground and air forces were unable to silence the AIF, A/2-20 FA was called upon to deliver GMLRS unitary. SFC Geter received the fire mission and directed the launcher to lay on the target. After the on-scene commander refined the grid, SFC Geter waited for airspace clearance to avoid a mid-air collision with the rocket barrage. As soon as aircraft were free of the rocket's flight path, the brigade commander authorized the use of GMLRS unitary.

The BOC received the digital fire command and launched one GMLRS unitary at the target, achieving a direct hit. The enemy's fighting position was shattered, and all AIF inside were killed while surrounding buildings remained intact. This was the first successful GMLRS unitary strike in support of troops-in-contact (TIC) in the history of the Field Artillery.

SFC Geter directed more than 30 missions firing more than 50 rockets in support of the Ramadi Offensive. Every round was observed as a direct hit. Not only did this accuracy provide unprecedented effects against the enemy, but also GMLRS unitary's precision was a key element of the Coalition Forces' information operations (IO) campaign. The minimal collateral damage and loss of zero civilian lives helped to bring the Ramadi population to the side of the Coalition Forces.

SFC Geter's diligence and attention to detail were responsible for the battery's spotless record, contributed to changing the face of the battlefield in western Iraq and changed the military's overall approach to the use of MLRS.

Through his combat achievements in the past year, his use of digital communications to keep the battery in the joint fight and his development of a BOC that will propel the Field Artillery deep into the 21st century, SFC Geter has made a positive and lasting impact on the Field Artillery and on the Army as a whole.